THE LESBIAN UNRAVELER

These twin powers of primacy, life and death, are aspects of Ixchel as moon-woman in which she waxes and wanes, sometimes visible and sometimes invisible. Similarly, her power to weave includes the power to unravel, so the weaver, like the moon, signifies the power of patterning and its converse, the power of disruption. Paula Gunn Allen *The SACRED HOOP*

Drawing by Gina Tafoya

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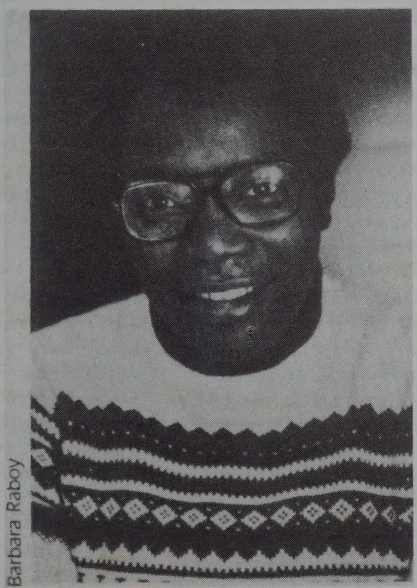
AFRICAN-AMERICAN LESBIANS REMEMBER PAT PARKER



Barbara Raboy

On June 18, 1989 Pat Parker, African-American lesbian poet and activist, died of cancer. Pat's work appeared in many feminist anthologies and periodicals. She also published several volumes of poetry, including:Child of Myself, Pit Stop, Womanslaughter, Movement in Black, and Jonestown and Other Madness. As an activist, Pat participated in the civil rights movement,the lesbian feminist movement and the women's health movement. The following are thoughts from several African-American Lesbians in memory of Pat Parker.

Joyce Penalver--Black lesbian feminist who is an office manager for one of the major universities in the San Francisco Bay area.

I heard about Pat's death from Pat Norman (African-American lesbian activist) on Castro Street and it really hit my heart chakra. I knew Pat had cancer and I thought she was in remission and was doing better. I just wanted her to be around as long as she could, which I hoped would be another 10 years. I had a great respect and sister love for Pat as a great poet and as an activist for Black lesbians and feminists. She did most of her activism through her poetry, which has influenced me a great deal. I didn't know of Pat Parker until I came to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1979. The first time I saw her was at a feminist event in San Francisco and I was just filled with a feeling of sisterhood and great pride when I saw this strong Black Lesbian on the stage reciting her poetry. I am 47 years old and Pat was around my age. So to see a Black Lesbian talking about the things that I was then evaluating in my own mind--such as feminism, being a Black lesbian in America, etc.--spoke directly to me. Recently Aché (an African-American lesbian publication in the San Francisco Bay area) published an interview with Pat Parker. Seeing that interview really made me feel good. Here was a Black publication

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honoring Pat the way she deserved to be honored. I also want to mention that being in Aché also exposed other Black women to Pat Parker; women who might otherwise not have learned of this remarkable lesbian. It is important that we support Black lesbian artists while they are alive. I want us to do that regardless of where they are performing. Many times these performances take place in a community where there are a majority of white lesbians. But is important for the artists to see us in the audience and it is important that we see them on the stages. Our mutual connection is essential to the continued creativity of our community.

Robin Carter--Musician, Mendocino, California

I first read Pat Parker in the summer of 1981. I was subletting another woman's room and she had Conditions 5 on her shelf. I knew so little about the women's movement then. A bunch of middle class white women I thought. Then I read Pat Parker's poetry; so fierce, so angry. Like me. But she apparently thought that the women's movement was valuable enough to expend energy struggling with those white women as an African-American woman; and she did print the poem in their publication. I admired her refusal to be silent. I admired her bravery. When I moved to northern California and heard that Pat Parker lived in the Bay area I thought maybe I'd go hear her read sometime.
Sometime...now the time is up. I am mourning the loss of yet another opportunity to connect with myself. I mourn the loss of this fierce African-American lesbian, who so eloquently voiced thoughts and feelings I once thought were mine alone. Thank you Pat for bringing us all a little bit closer

Lynn Scott-Teacher in Oakland, California-

I felt that Pat was of us. You could go into Mama Bears (an Oakland women's bookstore), or llies (an Oakland women's bar that closed in 1988) and see her browsing or having a drink. She was visible and accessible among us. This posture flies in the face of the stereotype that visionaries are distant and inacccessible. She really had roots in Oakland and it was obvious that this place and its people mattered to her. Pat was with us and yet committed to taking a stand, no matter how unpopular. I also remember her playfulness. I recollect one time when she talked about touring on the college circuit. She told a story of how she came out in the first half of the program in a dress, with heels, make-up and long nails; and in the second half she came out in a tailored outfit, slacks, flat shoes, and her natural hair, face and nails. It was just her way of saying don't try to label or pigeonhole me. Yet she was never quite serious. I never failed to be inspired by the depth of her own wisdom and the trust she placed in that wisdom.

Monifa Ajankau--Radical, militant feminist, San Francisco, California.

Pat Parker, a true champion for women's right to quality health care. A fine poet who enriched one's revolutionary instincts and moved us to question, to wonder and to take action for the betterment of humankind. Pat Parker will be remembered by us for she left us a beautiful legacy.

Vivienne Louise--Writer, Oakland, California.

I first became exposed to Pat Parker's work when I moved to the San Francisco Bay area in 1978. Through rumor I was informed that Pat was a difficult person; angry and hostile. I never knew her personally, so verification of these rumors remained out of my reach. I did, however, hear her read her poetry on two occasions. At these times I was struck by the power of her delivery and how her visible anger charged the atmosphere, sending electric fire to burn away the lies. Her courage to be so angry in such a public setting amazed me challenging me to

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THE POLITICS OF THERAPY

In 1946, the newly established National Institute of Mental Health awarded the first training grant for clinical psychology. Since that time, the numbers and effects of "entrepreneurial talkers" (term used by D. NiHera in The Misery Business) has spiralled continuously, slithering into every aspect of our lives. The many forms of therapy have been packaged and marketed to such an extent that it is impossible to avoid its effects. Nowhere are these effects shown more clearly than in our language. Kids used to misbehave--now they act out. People who react with anger and or sadness to a violent attack (individual or institutional) are defined as suffering from a syndrome. The attack becomes unimportant compared to ones feelings about it. Of course acting out and syndromes can be treated by a professional talker, and thus the therapy industry prospers. At the same time therapists make money from our pain, we are diverted from dwelling on the structures which cause our pain, and instead we are encouraged to accept the language and structures of our oppression.

All therapy is political and these politics are terrifying. Therapy serves a very clear function of social control and political diversion. All therapists are backed by the powerful and violent psychiatric establishment. Psychiatry is the genius of social control. (To this date, the feminists in the U.S. have taken no stand against the atrocities committed in the name of psychiatry. Could this possibly be tied into the prevalence of therapy in this community? Hmm...)

There are many dangers inherent in the concept of therapy, from the perpetuation of classism, professionalism and racist cultural bias to the personalization of political oppressions. Therapy takes away our rage and our analyses of oppression, both vital to any revolutionary movement.

An example of the diffusion of our rage is the creation of the post trauma stress syndrome. A woman who has been raped or battered is diagnosed as suffering from this (or a similar syndrome) and her anger/rage is funnelled into activities like jogging or dance. The reality that harm done to one woman serves to control all women is covered over. We are encouraged to deal with our violations in a "productive" way. We're taught a "healthy", individual way to suffer. In this way, one of our strongest assets, our rage, is compromised and weakened. The word liberation was quietly dropped from the women's movement.

A new emphasis in therapy and self-help is the effects of growing up in a dysfunctional family. Just what is a dysfunctional family? Aren't all nuclear families under capitalism/patriarchy destructive by their very nature? They are the most fundamental examples of unequal, oppressive power structures necessary to the functioning of this social/economic system. What has become of our ability to analyse politically and identify the perpetrators of our oppression? Thoughtful and insightful analyses of the nuclear family have been written by Redstockings, Ti Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone, among others. These analyses clearly show the role of the nuclear family and the effects of growing up in a society built upon that structure. Women's Liberation attacked head on the politics of the nuclear family. Now feminists flock to feminist therapists, join twelve step programs or other "self-help" groups to cope with their individual problems resulting from a childhood spent in the nuclear family, which is now defined as dysfunctional. A political analysis has been reduced to a personal aberration. This really makes me furious. It's just one example of the co-option of political activity by the therapy concept.

Therapy redefines our friendships, dictating what to share with friends and what to share with your friend-for-hire. Painful issues are saved for therapy. This undermines the groundwork of building strong, trusting friendships. No revolution can ever be fought by friends who share only the good times. Therapy, in this way also, is a very effective tool in keeping us isolated.

Therapy also defines our behaviors. Only certain behaviors are acceptable and good. This is also dangerous. Predictable behavior is easier to control.

Ai do not view the political, counter-revolutionary effects of therapy as side effects, any more than ai see Tardive Dyskenesia as a side effect of psychiatric drugs or memory loss and brain damage as a side effect of electroshock torture. They are all life threatening EFFECTS which keep people passive and harmless to the power structures.

To be continued, more or less.

Morgan

THE FESTIVALS: WHAT'S BREWING?

Once upon a time, I remember one of the music festival organizers saying, "This is just a musical event; don't try and make something political out of it." Over time we've come to see that just having 7,000 lesbians gathered in one place is political.

The festivals, and Michigan in particular, have become the eye of the hurricane for issues we sorely need to deal with nationally and in our local communities, incldiuing racism, class, ablism, s/m, and health issues.

So, what's brewing this year? For one thing, the New England Womyn's Music Retreat(NEWMR) decided to cancel this year, because a challenging group has threatened a boycott of the event. The issues include a committment to working on racism.

Lesbians seem to need to precipitate a crisis in order to deal with issues. We've seen what happens when our politics become blurred as they did at Sisterfire when racism and male violence met head on and tested womyn's loyalties.

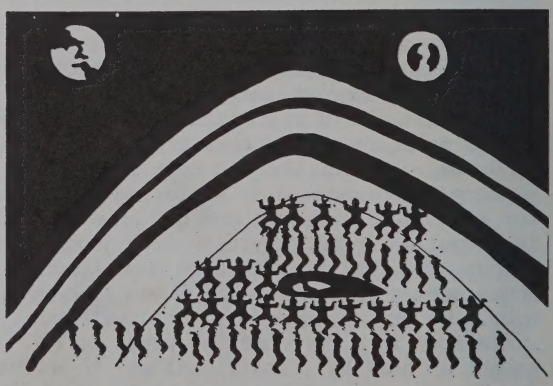
Lesbian Connection has been an invaluable forum over the years, but I wonder why we mostly react to events after the fact, especially around racism--after womyn of color have been insulted for the umpteenth time, after a festival episode, after this situation or that.

Most recently at Georgetown University's April Conference on "Women in America: Legacies of Race and Ethnicity," the womyn of color felt exploited by the usual turn of events: the womyn of color performed for the benefit of white womyn who comprised most of the planning and audience. Bernice Johnson Reagon remarked that if white womyn use the energy of womyn of color without providing any support in return, it is exploitative. Support can include action or coalition building. Now,after the fact, white womyn are reacting to the event. When will a shift happen?

The Reactive Posture: this is an appropriate label for how white womyn persist in dealing with racism. It makes white womyn the unwitting or unconscious accomplices of the patriarchy, for perpetrating one of their traps. White womyn keep falling in and keep needing to be re-educated--even though we realize that racism keeps womyn from bonding and keeps us from being the truly transforming movement we could be.

How do we take responsibility? I believe thinking ahead, planning and strategizing can help. What will happen next summer, for example, when the Gay Olympics happen in August in Vancouver-- just days before Michigan? Won't most womyn have to choose which event to attend? And won't most of the womyn who have the luxury of even choosing be white and middle class? Are Lesbians of color or mostly gay white men planning that event? Is anyone asking these questions?

And wouldn't it be wonderful if the womyn who wanted to attend both could? What if womyn athletes could participate and then trek over to Michigan filled with some time spent out of the straight world? To spend about 3 weeks in an accepting, expansive environment surrounded by other lesbians. Time has a remarkable way of helping break down patriarchal influence. One of the strengths of these festivals is they do create a block of time and space for us to come together and watch the chemistry build.



--Sisterlode

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break out of my conventional molds. Often, when I am reaching for deep thoughts in the pit of my belly I think of Pat and her ability to let the volcano roar, no matter what the cost. Such infernos are necessary if the stagnant sludge of oppressive thinking is ever going to move. Thank you Pat for moving us further on the path towards ourselves.

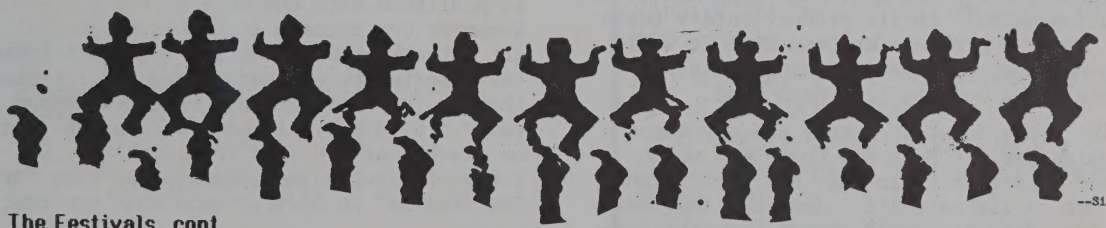
Anna Lee--Black lesbian separatist from the midwest.

I was most moved by Pat Parker's Womanslaughter poem. It is a narrative poem and tells the story of her sister being killed by her brother-in-law. He, however, is charged with manslaughter, because he is a "quiet black man" instead of first degree murder. Although this piece was written over 10 years ago the gist of the last stanza still rings in my mind. It essentially acknowledges the strength of women and the recognition that men are waging war against us and that we will no longer passively accept it.

*I have gained many sisters.
And if one is beaten,
or raped, or killed,
I will not come in mourning black.
I will not pick the right flowers.
I will not celebrate her death
& it will matter not
if she's Black or white--
if she loves women or men.
I will come with my many sisters
and decorate the streets
with the innards of those
brothers in womenslaughter.
No more, can I dull my rage
in alcohol & deference
to men's courts.
I will come to my sisters,
not dutiful,
I will come strong.

* Reprinted from Womanslaughter by Pat Parker, 1978, Diana Press, Oakland, California, p. 62.

compiled by Vivienne Louise 1989.



--Sisterlode

The Festivals, cont.

I make this proposal: this year can we womyn (participants) at Michigan and elsewhere initiate steps to raise money, scholarships for womyn who wish to attend these events? What about a Pat Parker Memorial Scholarship fund to assure the inequities she so powerfully articulated will cease? Such an action supports womyn directly. Perhaps some womyn in our communities know how to go about establishing an equitable system of support and planning, ahead of time.

If we can find money for a National Lesbian Conference, can't we support the attendance and planning of womyn of color and working class womyn in all our important events as part of a national prerogative or do we only pay for the main stars to attend?

As a writer for The Lesbian Unraveler, I would be interested in following through on how our national community deals with these upcoming events We must strengthen lesbian bonding, which the Right is methodically deteriorating.

We all need a week at Michigan, and at as many festivals and conferences that create joy and change.

-Sandia-

SHORTS...TELEGRAMS...HOT BRIEFS...SHORTS...TELEGRAMS...HOT BRIEFS...SHORTS.....

This information comes from "Women in Action", published by Isis International: In Tanzania, women from diverse classes and backgrounds have formed the Shoga Women Group. The group is dedicated to raising awareness among women in different parts of the country, through exchange of information and experiences. It especially aims for communication between urban and rural women. The main communication channel is a monthly newsletter. The women also intend to set up a women's center in Dar es Salaam. Their address is: The Shoya Women Group, P.O. Box 7393, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Women's Feature Service (WFS) has been established by the Inter Press Service (IPS--a Third World News Agency) to promote the views and analysis of women and their perceptions of national and international development.

To counteract mainstream media treatment, WFS provides features for the news media written by Third World women journalists, from women's perspective, with a special focus on development issues. For more information, contact Anita Anand, Coordinator, Women, Communication and Development Project, Inter Press Service, Via Panisperna 207, 00184 Rome, Italy.

Avon Products has announced a permanent end to using animals in its product safety tests. The "beauty" products company said it will rely on other methods including tests on people and a computerized data base.

The Rocky Mountain Humane Society waged a campaign against Mary Kay Cosmetics which played a large part in Mary Kay's decision to temporarily halt its animal testing. Mary Kay President Richard Bartlett says the company "has dropped the practice while it evaluates recent advances in non-animal testing methods."

Mexico - U.S. Labor Women's Exchange is a conference to be held in November in Mexico City. It is being organized by the Sept. 19th International Garment Workers Union. Write to: Maria Hernandez, Sindicato "19 de Septiembre", Apartado Postal 10578, Colonia Centro, 06000, Mexico D.F., Mexico.

The 2nd Annual Gathering of American Indian Gays and Lesbians will be held August 24-28 in Wisconsin. Write P.O. Box 10229, Minneapolis, MN 55458 or call (612) 649-1699, 870-4848 for more information.

There will be a Regional Lesbian-Feminist Conference (western Canada and northwest U.S.) Sept. 22-24 in Seattle. For more information, write to RLFC, P.O. Box 22061, Seattle, WA 98122.

Housing and civil-rights advocates are calling for 1 million people to descend on Washington, DC on October 7, in a "National March for Housing Now!" They will call on Congress to restore the $25 billion annual budget for low-income housing wiped out by the Reagan administration. Estimates say the number of homeless in the U.S. is 3 million, with the prospects of nearly 19 million in the next 15 years.

"Throwing Our Weight Around" is a video in process by Sandy Dwyer, a fat activist. She is independently producing this "positive, self-affirming examination of the lives of fat women". For more information, write to: Boston Area Fat Liberation, P.O. Box 1836, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

A new women's newsjournal focusing on lesbian prisoners has just started up. It's called "Out/Inside" and is for all women, inside prison and out, "interested in the lives of lesbian prisoners, and building wimmin's community between locked-in wimmin and wimmin in the 'free world'". "Out/Inside" is published with the help of R.O.S.I.--Remember Our Sisters Inside--a prisoners' art network. R.O.S.I. gives "women locked-in the opportunity to communicate their visions through their artwork and writings beyond the walls." Both R.O.S.I. and "Out/Inside" can be reached at P.O. Box 2821, Oakland, CA 94609. The suggested subscription rate for "Out/Inside" is $6/yr.--send what you can.

The Supreme Court recently gave prison officials greater power to bar publications and censor prisoners' reading material. Officials can ban publications under regulations that are "reasonably related" to what officials determine to be prison order and security. Wardens can exclude publications they believe could promote the use of physical violence or that contain explicit homosexual material.

This makes legal what prison officials have been trying to do all along--censor prisoners' reading material.

Shorts were compiled by Susanna Smith/ Sources used include Gay Community News, The Seattle Times, Media Report to Women, the Guardian, Workers World, Bayou La Rose, Lesbian Connection and Out/Inside.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Asian Lesbian Conference
University of California, Santa Cruz. September 1-4, 1989. Contact Women's Studies Dep't. for information.

"DYNAMICS OF COLOR" calling for lesbian visual artists speaking to the issue of racism. Exhibit: Oct 4 -Nov 4, 1989, in San Francisco. Send slides or photos. Deadline: Aug 12 (entry fee of $3.00 may be waived) Send SASE for info to Lesbian Agenda for Action, 3543 18th St#32, SF, CA 94110. Conference is Nov. 11-12 at 3750-18th St. San Francisco. For application and information, call: LAFA, (415) 522-5677.

WIM, a black owned, women owned press is calling for submissions for a gay wedding book of same sex unions,including photos, and an accompanying description of vows and the decision to commit their lives in public ritual. Deadline: Aug. 15. For information write: 2215-R Market St. Box 137 San Francisco,CA 95380 & (209)667-0966).

Aché, the Black Lesbian Newsletter is still publishing. For information you can write:
Aché
P.O. Box 6071
Atlanta, Georgia 94706

10-15 YEARS AGO

☐ **WOMANSLAUGHTER**, poetry by Pat Parker.
☐ The Black Women's Issue of **Conditions: Five** edited by Lorraine Bethel and Barbara Smith.

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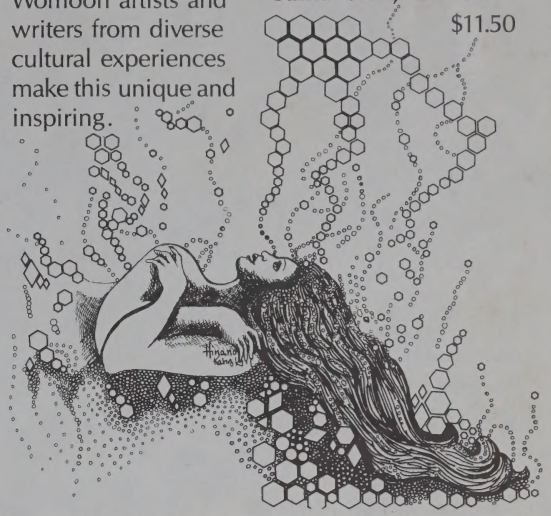

This is the third issue of the **Unraveler.** The newservice is committed to being a more culturally diverse, more inclusive voice of/for the Lesbian community. Please tell us what kinds of things are happening, so we can share information and inspire action and womyn bonding.

Each page is the responsibility of different womyn, so the type styles and layout will vary.

So far the response has been wonderful. We do need continued green $ support. Our printer donates her time to print the paper, but we have mailing and paper costs. It is only $5-12.00/year to be on the mailing list; more if you can, less if you can't. Single issues are $1.00. Bookstores: for each copy you sell,keep $.40, send us $.60. Free to womyn in prison, or a mental institution, or those who can't afford a sub.

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